Interview with Idar D. Rimestad

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY IDAR D. RIMESTAD

Interviewed by: Thomas Stern

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Q: I would like to start by asking about your personal background.

RIMESTAD: I was born and raised in North Dakota. I went to the University of North Dakota and got a Bachelor of Philosophy degree in 1940. In 1941, I went to Washington and obtained a job with the National Youth Administration. After six weeks of training, I was assigned to personnel work. I had looked at the various activities in the NYA and was not an engineer, not a teacher; there were a lot of positions for which I was not qualified, but I was attracted to the management-personnel field.

After some further training, I ended up in the salary-wage division. I worked there until December, 1942 at which time I transferred to the Office of the Quartermasters' Office, in the salary-wage program. I stayed there until the latter part of 1944 as a civilian employee. Then I transferred to the Manhattan District, which was the organization that preceded the Atomic Energy Commission. I was still in a salary-wage division, but with a much broader scope. It was a small office which got into other management activities dealing with wages.A salary-wage analyst would analyze an organizational unit—what it did, how it fitted into the whole organizational structure. Then he would interview the people in that unit and then would write job descriptions. Sometimes the descriptions matched the

capabilities of the employees, sometimes they didn't. After we would finish a survey, we had a full picture of what the unit should be doing and what its salary structure should be. This is the government's method of setting salaries for its civil service. There was not usually very much difference among government organizations on how salary-wage analyses were conducted. There were people who went out to analyze specific problem jobs. I spent most of time in that business looking at and working on total units. Sometimes, it was a pleasant job—you could raise salaries; sometimes, it was very unpleasant because the individual didn't measure up and management would then transfer some of his duties to others. That was the very unpleasant part of it.

Q: Did you enjoy the work? It was considerably different from your academic training.

RIMESTAD: I enjoyed the work very much. Every day was a new day. You could go to work in the morning and never know what you would encounter when you got into the organizations. It was amazing in that people, to a considerable extent, found their own level. If they were very productive and very good, you found that they took over the more responsible jobs. Then there was the other side. The person who doesn't quite measure up has duties taken away and put into a position in which he will not produce too much, but also will not cause any problems.

Q: That is an interesting comment because the public's view of civil servants is that they are in a job which they do over and over again and seldomly rise to the occasion. Your experience apparently was different.

RIMESTAD: Yes. The fact of the matter is that people are different. Some are better than others. There are those that are not going to sit there doing the same thing day after day. They are going to reach for more duties; they are going to reach for promotions. Others find their level wherever that might be and sit there for the rest of their lives. Those who reach for additional duties are rewarded by an upward reclassification of their positions or a vacancy at a higher level arises and they move into it.

Q: Let's return to your career. In 1944, you started with the Manhattan Division.

RIMESTAD: Right. I was there until mid-1946. It was still at that time part of the U.S. military under General Groves. Then I got a telegram from G-1, which was the U.S. Army in Europe asking whether I would like to come over there for a year or two to help establish the salary-wage program for U.S. Army in Europe. At that time, every division and every army had its own system and it was a mess. Some uniformity had to be established for indigenous employees. There were few American civilian employees in Europe at this time. It was mostly military and indigenous personnel.

When I left in November, 1946 I went on a one or two year assignment, after which I could return although about this time the Manhattan District was being converted to the Atomic Energy Commission—that happened towards the end of 1946 or early 1947. By that time, I was in Europe—Frankfurt for a while and then Heidelberg, enjoying my work. it was a completely new operation. The first year flew by rather quickly and I was asked to make decision on whether I wished to return to the US to exercise my re-employment rights or would I prefer to stay in Europe. At that point, I didn't want to leave.

At about this time—late 1948—there were discussion about establishing the High Commissioner's Office and they were recruiting. I along with several others was asked to come to Frankfurt to be interviewed for jobs. I was being considered for a position in salary-wage administration with the possibility of becoming the assistant director of personnel if things worked out. One of the division directors would be selected to be the deputy to the Chief of Personnel. Glenn Wolfe was responsible for the management side of the High Commissioner. Dave Wilkin interviewed me, but I also talked to Glenn Wolfe. I was offered the wage-salary position and accepted it and stayed there for approximately three years. Then I became the assistant chief of the Personnel office.

We were going through a very hefty reduction of personnel at that time. we were turning activities back to the Germans and therefore reducing our own personnel. I was the

assistant chief for about six months and then I was promoted to Director of Personnel for the High Commission. In late 1951, we—my family and myself—had moved to the Bad Godesberg office and housing complex which had been built under Glenn Wolfe's direction. Bad Godesberg was close to Bonn, which had become West Germany's new temporary capital. The living in Bad Godesberg was very nice. We had our own grocery store, swimming pool, gymnasium, school. It was a totally self contained unit. One didn't have to go near the German economy if one didn't want to. But the situation was rapidly changing by the mid-1950s. In 1947-48, the German economy was in terrible shape. The whole system was in bad shape. The Office of the High Commissioner did what the Army had done; it set up self-contained units that didn't have to rely on the local economy. by the time I left in 1954, the economy had improved to the point that a lot of one's material needs could be acquired from local stores. I don't know if and when the Bad Godesberg commissary was closed, but it certainly wasn't necessary after 1955-56.

If the commissary stayed open after that or worse, if it is still open, it is a little sad because it encouraged Americans never to go to the German economy. They could have been in Bad Godesberg for two years and never leave the American compound, which is sad. I can understand it happening in Moscow or China or in a lot of places where some support is necessary. But in Western Europe it certainly wasn't necessary after the mid 1950s.

I returned to Washington in the Spring of 1954. When I joined the High Commission, I was appointed as a Staff-2 Officer. Subsequently a group of three State Department officials came to Germany looking for people in the High Commissioner's Office who wished to make the Foreign Service their career. I had that interview—the only member of the team that I can remember was Huston Lay, a lawyer. I was approved for transfer to a permanent Foreign Service appointment. I had by this time already decided that I would enjoy a career in the Foreign Service. I didn't see myself as remaining in personnel work, but wanted to get into some over-all management position eventually. I had enjoyed my assignment in Germany immensely. I had found it a real challenge. It had involved relating to high ranking civilians and generals. As in everything else, you don't win all the battles,

but you had to win a fair share. When you made decisions, better than half had better be right. You can't operate very long if you don't. While in Germany, one of the people I got to know well was John J. McCloy. People had a tendency to go to him to complain. So I would trot up to his office and explain the situation to him. He never reversed me once in approximately the dozen cases that were raised with him. I was of course very careful on some of these because they were lawyers, economists. etc. out of the U.S. who had joined his staff. Frankly, a lot didn't measure up and were transferred to positions which were somewhat lower than the original appointments or contracts called for.

Q: Did McCloy get involved in management to any considerable extent?

RIMESTAD: I am sure he talked often with Glenn Wolfe. He was a hands-on manager. I got to know him later on again in another job. He was always hands-on and didn't brook any nonsense. If you tended to be too loquacious or if you wandered, he got you back on track in a hurry. He was a very effective administrator, but he also let you do your work. He didn't bother you unless something came up that invariably involved a friend or someone who was in Germany whom he felt he had to massage a little bit or to take the time to convince him that he had looked into it. The large problems were over-all management and housing with which I was not involved. I was strictly personnel.

In 1956, I was assigned to the Washington Regional Personnel Division in the Department of State. This was a unit that placed Foreign Service officers in positions in Washington which had been designated as positions to be filled by Foreign Service employees. Bob Ryan was one of the top men in the personnel office at that time. My job was to talk to the various bureaus in the State Department to see what their upcoming needs might be and to inform them that I had a Foreign Service officer who might fit that vacancy. Sometimes you had to go to two or three Bureaus before the officer was placed.

I was in that unit for six-eight months and then was put in charge, under an officer by the name of Sydney Laffon. He was a very nice fellow, a typical Foreign Service officer. He

was smart; he knew the system. The Wriston program was in full bloom at this time. He knew changes were coming and he wanted to accommodate to them. I had been there for a year perhaps when I applied for an FSO appointment under the Wriston program. I was interviewed and accepted as an FSO-3, which corresponded to my grade of FSS-1; they wouldn't promote in the transfer, but they would bring you in laterally.

I stayed in that position until November, 1957. Those were interesting times because we were bringing people to Washington, as recommended by the Wriston Commission. Many didn't really wanted to come, but they had been overseas for four, five, six years and the policy had become that if they had been overseas for that long, it was time to assign them to Washington for a tour of duty. I generally sympathized with that policy. I am not sure that I agreed with the strict enforcement of bringing officers to Washington every four years because situations differed. I did agree that they shouldn't stay in India, for example, or Guatemala six or eight years. That was wrong. When these officers returned to the U.S., it was a foreign country for them. One has to guard against that syndrome. However, if you are in London or Paris, that is a different situation. For those assigned to Third World countries, it was important that they return to see what was going on in the real world.

Q: Tell us a little about the personnel system in the late 1950s. It has been alleged that it was very much “club” oriented; that is geographically oriented with each Regional Bureau taking care of its own officers. Is that the way it was?

RIMESTAD: Yes, but it is probably never going to change. People in the European Bureau get to know each other. They will know the junior officers as they rise through the ranks. There is a tendency on everyone's part to be with people they know and whom they know to be capable. Sometimes, the “old buddy” system brings people that are not so capable, but that one would find any place. The system at that time worked pretty well if you had a Personnel Office in Washington that was strong enough to oppose successfully the Assistant Secretaries. Many of the Assistant Secretaries were hard-nosed. They wouldn't accept nonsense from anybody. There was one EUR Assistant Secretary who was

particularly difficult. But his Executive Director, Herman Pollack, was easy to work with. I liked him. If he felt you were doing your job, he would support you. Fred Irving followed Pollack and he was another good man. Again, if you did your job, he would back you. If he had differences with you, he would discuss them with you. These men had great influence; very rarely did the Assistant Secretary over-ride them or take issue with them on personnel cases.

Q: But as a system, you were satisfied then how the personnel assignment process worked?

RIMESTAD: Yes, because the people making the assignments, in every instance, were people who were part of the system, who were in Personnel for a four or six year tour of duty and then went on. They were not professionals in the sense that they came to Personnel and were going to spend their lives in that office, assigning people here and there. It doesn't take a mental giant to figure out that if EUR needed a political officer to work with a foreign President's staff or Foreign Ministry, you had to have an officer who had some knowledge of that country's political situation and who spoke the language of the country. He also had be a personable fellow and out-going. That is the kind of officer you needed.

Q: As a professional personnel man, did you have any qualms with Foreign Service officers working in the Personnel Office?

RIMESTAD: No. I felt that one of the greatest assets at that time was the assignment to Personnel of people of different experiences and background so that they could see that Personnel didn't have six heads. When they returned to their areas of specializations, they then trusted the system and brought that trust to their colleagues. It was a great plus. It may be still true today, but back then, there was great trepidation when people had to do business with the Personnel Office because they didn't trust it. But if they knew someone in the Office or had worked in it, they were much more comfortable. This had a way of

getting back to the top people in the Department. That is where it really helped. If the lower rank officers and staff are happy, then this obviously colors the leadership's view. Until officers got to senior positions, such as chief political or economic officer or DCM, we had very few problems. It worked well. When they reached the senior levels, that small group at the top, then you had a different situation. The Ambassador had strong feelings about whom he wanted; the Assistant Secretary had strong feeling about whom he wanted. At any one time, we had a half dozen officers who could do a given job. Whom do you select?

Q: Were you assigned to the domestic side of Personnel all during this period or did you move into foreign assignments as well?

RIMESTAD: My job throughout the period was placing Foreign Service officers into Washington positions. I had nothing to do with Civil Service or with overseas assignments. Every month I would get a list of people who would be available for assignment in the next three months and then I would try to place them.

When you got to the senior positions, that was difficult at times. There were officers who had not worked out very well. We had a medical complement—that was an over-complement, to which “hard-to-place” officers were assigned as a holding operation. I am sure that it is still part of today's system. What would one do with an officer who just hadn't worked out and every one knew it and no one wanted him? Yet, he had efficiency reports that were pretty good. So we would bring him back on that over-complement list. That was always a problem. We used to have as many as 50 or 60 people on that list. The pressure from senior levels was always to get rid of that complement to save money. But I think it is a necessary part of any system that requires relatively frequent re-assignments. There may be an officer coming from India, for example, who had been there for four years who ran into some problem—be it medical or professional—that makes him difficult to place. What is the system going to do with him? He has to be put in some place so that he can get paid while his problem is being resolved. You can't

fire him; there is no basis for doing that. The written record does not provide a basis for doing that at that time. The complement was also used for good officers who because of accident of timing could not be assigned to permanent positions, but whom we knew would eventually be so assigned. There were lots of those; as a matter of fact, I think most of the officers on the over-complement list fell into that category. Only approximately 10% of the complement was impossible; the rest wasn't. Most of the assignment problems arose because the vacancies did not match the skills of the officers who were available. I had a number of good friends who were very competent, but for whom we didn't have an appropriate vacancy. But we knew that we would have some. So we would put one on the complement and when the vacancy arose, we had an officer immediately available. We often put officers in that situation in the offices to which they would be eventually assigned, but they would continue to be charged to Personnel's budget until the actual transfer to a permanent position occurred.

Q: Your next assignment was to Moscow?

RIMESTAD: In 1957, I knew that my tour of duty in the Department was coming to an end and I had to think about what my next assignment would be. I talked to Syd Laffon. He said he would look into overseas possibilities. He said that there were two jobs that he knew would be opening in late 1957: one, was administrative counselor in Madrid and the other was administrative officer in Moscow. There were some other people in the room during this discussion. Everybody jumped and said that I should take Madrid—beautiful housing, a nice club, etc. Every single person in the room said the same thing. They thought I would be a fool not to take Madrid. It would be a delightful place to spend four years. I thought to myself that I heard this so much—an officer goes to a post because of family considerations, for reasons having nothing to do with the job. Then he's stuck; he sits for four years doing little in a very nice set-up. So I asked for a few days to consider the choice. I talked to my wife; she thought Madrid would be great. There was a school there. If we went to Moscow, we would have to send our two girls to West Germany—it

had the nearest American school—a school run by the U.S. military. One of my daughters was to be a junior in high school and the other would just start eighth grade.

I thought about the various issues and finally decided on Moscow. It was a post where things were happening. If I were to make the Foreign Service my career, then that would be the place to go. So I surprised everybody. Fred Irving called me and asked: “Are you sure that this is what you want? You prefer Moscow over Madrid?”. I said: “Yes”. This was the Fall of 1957. It was one of the career turning points for me because I got to Moscow and everything broke loose. First there was a big American exposition during which the Nixon-Khrushchev “kitchen” debate took place—I was just a couple of feet away from Nixon during that dialogue. Then the U-2 plane, piloted by Gary Powers, went down—I was one of the half-dozen officials who got the first view of the plane.

Q: Let me take you back to late 1957 when you were first assigned to Moscow as administrative officer. Until then, your experience had been entirely in the field of personnel. Your Moscow position had a much broader range of responsibilities? How was the transition?

RIMESTAD: It was very easy because as a salary-wage man, I had become familiar with all the administrative jobs. I had spent lots of time in procurement, lots in finance—reviewing what people were doing. It wasn't going into something that was completely new. As a salary-wage analyst, I had gotten into every one of those administrative activities. And I knew them pretty well.

Q: So you felt comfortable with other areas of administration besides personnel?

RIMESTAD: Yes. I would not have been comfortable getting into economics or political work or public affairs; that I wouldn't have messed with.

Q: Who was the ambassador in Moscow in 1957?

RIMESTAD: Llewellyn Thompson—a great guy. I didn't know him at all when the assignment was made. Thompson called Fred Irving, whom he knew well. He asked Fred whether he should take me. Fred said: “Yes. Absolutely. Take him”. I arrived in Moscow not knowing anybody, the Ambassador, the DCM, anybody, not a single soul.

Q: How did that feel?

RIMESTAD: It was difficult because Fred Irving sent me with some instructions. For example, the Political Section and most of the Economic Section were using Embassy vehicles as if they were their personal cars. Fred wanted that stopped. He was concerned that one of the people would get involved in an accident and that then the Department would have to explain what an officer was doing on a Sunday afternoon on an outing with his family in a government car. These weren't trips in the city; they were going out into the country-side. Fred wanted that practice stopped. So I went to the Ambassador and explained to him that the Embassy had a problem with its senior officers using government cars on weekends for personal use and that I had been instructed to stop the practice. If anyone needed a car, he or she should get either the Ambassador's or my approval, so that we could document the reasons for the use of the car. That new directive did not go over very well because the use of government vehicles for personal purposes had been the practice for many years. We only had five or six sedans and every Friday night, officers would take the cars and use them over the weekend. But that stopped.

Q: What were the living conditions in Moscow in the late 1950s?

RIMESTAD: We had two sets of living quarters for the American staff. We had apartments in the Embassy itself—that is where I lived—and then we had an apartment building near the University. I wouldn't say that living conditions were tough. The most difficult aspect of living in Moscow came from the isolation—we had no Russian friends; all contacts were with other Embassies. The diet was fairly restricted. There were two or three restaurants one could go to. We got a half a dozen tickets to the Bolshoi every week, which would be

given to whom ever asked for them. The first year of my tour was alright. It was interesting. The second year was not so interesting. When I got into the third year, I didn't like it at all. It was dull; you couldn't do anything. You could walk the streets, but there was no social life except within your own group. I was very friendly with the Germans, the British, Italians, French and the Scandinavians. We had good relations with the Turkish Embassy and the Japanese Embassy. That was about it.

Q: How often did you get out of Moscow?

RIMESTAD: Every six months. I got out easily because there was the Ambassador's plane that came in every six months. I would take it to Germany to buy goods for the Embassy and the Commissary. I would fly back to Moscow the following week. The plane would also carry about a dozen staff members. There were a lot of people who didn't want to avail themselves of this opportunity because the plane flew into Berlin and then they were on their own. They didn't want to go there. Tickets to Copenhagen and Stockholm were very cheap. So there was no problem in leaving Moscow. People would save up their leave so that they could take an extensive vacation in Italy or France or some other country.

Q: But the limited social life was wearing?

RIMESTAD: Yes. As I said, not for the first year. Everyone enjoyed the first year; it was fun and interesting. Most people didn't stay for more than two years. I stayed more because Eisenhower was scheduled to come to Moscow. That didn't happen, but I was requested to remain at post during the planning period. I didn't leave Moscow until August 1960, although I was eligible to leave the previous November. The Eisenhower visit was canceled because of the U-2 incident.

We had one or two private Americans in Moscow at that time and they found it a hardship. Most of the Foreign Service personnel had been in places like Nicaragua or Indonesia or

other Third World countries. They didn't find Moscow too bad in terms of living conditions. They thought they were pretty good.

Q: What is the role of administration in an Embassy like Moscow?

RIMESTAD: Total and complete logistical support, including groceries. We worked with the Russians (BUROBIN was the name of the organization we worked with) in handling problems that our personnel got involved in or getting more trips to Leningrad and matters of that kind—the social aspects, not the official ones. My office was the contact with the Russians on everything, except for political or economic work.

Q: The Russians provided the local personnel?

RIMESTAD: Yes. All good KGB people. That was well known—no question about it. We were always finding wire-taps on telephones. Some of the Russians were maids. I'll never forget the naval attach# who was fiddling around with his telephone one day. He unscrewed it and out popped a small gadget. It was a listening device which had been placed between the two beds. He said: " Wait until my wife finds out. She is always after me to come over to her bed to visit her. She will be very unhappy!". We found a lot of that type of thing. I remember that when Ambassador Thompson wanted to discuss some sensitive issue, he would hand me a piece of paper and we would exchange written notes instead of conversation. He used to say that there was just no way of knowing how the Russians might have bugged his office. It was about at this time that we got a secure room, but your inclination is to blurt out one sentence assuming that this wouldn't make any difference.

But the whole building was bugged—every room. They bugged the rooms by placing devices behind the radiators. The bugging system was a single system so that moving one radiator didn't make any difference. You would have to shut the whole water system down. They had been there for several years before I got there. They were there during the two

and half years I was there and they were there after that. If someone would have moved his refrigerator, he would have spotted the bug.

Q: The local employees had access to the Embassy?

RIMESTAD: Yes, up to the fifth floor. On the sixth floor, there were the DCM's and the military attach#'s residences. The seventh and eighth floors were offices. So the locals did not have access to those floors unless they were escorted by a Marine Guard. My office was on the first floor to which the locals had access.

Q: How was the American staff while you were in Moscow?

RIMESTAD: It had its ups and downs. In general, I thought they were very good. On the administrative side, with probably one exception, I would have hired them all. They were very good. They were a gung-ho group. I didn't realize until I was leaving that one of my officers was an alcoholic. I never knew it. I always wondered why he was never available on weekends. You could never reach him. That is when he would load up. The rest of the week he didn't touch alcohol. He was the only one who could have been a problem. As a matter of fact, after his return to the U.S., he got into some kind of trouble and was let go. I am sure that the Department screened potential assignees very carefully before sending them to Moscow. One had to be pretty well adjusted to be assigned to Moscow.

Q: Did the stress of confinement and limited social activities affect personnel?

RIMESTAD: Yes, particularly the wives. They would be contentious; they would find problems where there weren't any or complain about perceived problems that couldn't be solved. There were problems that went with being in Moscow; if a wife couldn't accommodate to them, I would call in the officer and asked him to get matters under control because there wasn't anything we could do. Moscow was Moscow and couldn't be changed. Some would be unhappy with us for not having fresh vegetables or meat or something along those lines. I would ask the officer whether he wanted to stand in line at

the meat market. He or his wife could stand in line for hours, but would probably get some meat. There was no way the Embassy could provide the meat. The complaints were about little stuff. It didn't affect efficiency or subject people to KGB enticements. There were a number of individuals, as history has told us, who apparently did play around, but it was not obvious to us at the time. The KGB was a problem for single people.

Q: You had a Marine detachment during your tour?

RIMESTAD: Yes. They were no problem while I was there. The problems with the Marines came later after my tour. We did have one Army fellow who was socializing too much; so the Army transferred him out.

Q: Who was the DCM when you arrived in Moscow?

RIMESTAD: Richard (Dick) Davis. Just before my departure from Moscow, Davis was replaced—he had been the DCM for two of the years I was there. Neither of the DCMs was involved in the management and administration of the Embassy. They generally left me totally and completely alone. Dick would listen to his wife and come back with some tales about alleged problems. For example, we needed a garage for our automobiles. We had a big vacant lot beside the Embassy. I had decided to take one-half and build a garage on it so we could get all our cars under cover. We had eleven vehicles and only three could be inside. The ladies opposed the idea because the vacant area was being used by their children as a playground. I had watched this for sometime; there was a lot of mud when it rained. It wasn't really a playground in any sense of the word. But Mrs. Davis got all the ladies together and they all agreed that no garage should be built and that the playground should remain as it was. I went to the Ambassador and told him that we desperately needed the garage. I pointed out that half of the lot—75 feet by 100 feet —would still be available for play. That is a big lot to play on. He asked: “For heaven's sake, who is creating this problem?”. So I told him that Dick Davis's wife was leading the opposition. He said: “Forget it. I'll take care of it”. I never heard another word about it. That

was the only time that I went to the Ambassador with an administrative problem. We had all sorts of problems on who could get on his airplane—we had twelve spaces and sixteen wanted to go—and that sort of thing. But we managed to decide that at my level. The Ambassador made a studied effort not to get involved in my work unless he had to—like the playground matter.

Q: Was the Embassy staff a congenial group?

RIMESTAD: Yes. I think there was a good team effort. You had the political and economic officers—that was a clubby group in that they didn't mix much with anybody else. Then you had the administrative, consular and military personnel— a group that socialized together a lot. At Christmas time or Thanksgiving, the whole Embassy got together. There was no animosity between any of the groups, except that the communication people, the military sergeants, the consular and administrative people—who were all more or less at the same level—tended to want to be together. The political and economic officers, of whom there were only six, more or less stuck together. But these divisions didn't create any tensions.

Q: You mentioned car usage as a major problem at the beginning of your tenure. What other administrative problems did you encounter when you were in Moscow?

RIMESTAD: Housing. That was a perpetual problem. There was always a shortage. Our Embassy was growing. Even if Washington assigned one additional person, we had a problem. We were always pushing the Russians to give us more housing. We couldn't do anything with the main building itself. That was completely filled. The Russians had set aside some housing units for the foreign diplomatic community. All were looking for more space. The others would complain that we were getting more than our fair share. It was a constant battle with the Russians to let us have another apartment or two. That was true throughout my tour. The Russians were building at the time; they also broke relations with Israel and other countries. The units occupied by the diplomats from those countries would be immediately reassigned to other foreign missions. But there was a continuous

great demand by all, although probably more from us because we had by far the largest Embassy in Moscow.

We didn't have temporary quarters. We wouldn't permit any new arrivals unless we had permanent quarters for them, unless it was for a very short period and then they would stay in a hotel.

Q: What about financial resources? Any problems with that issue?

RIMESTAD: We got extra-special treatment from Washington. When we desperately needed money for something, we would get it. Our needs were small compared to London, Paris or Rome. We would ask for $18,000 when Paris would be asking for $1,800,000. We never had any problems with money. We knew what our budget was and what our expenditures would be. We weren't going to get any more housing, cars or anything else. The Russians put the limits on. So money was never a real problem.

Q: How about visitors?

RIMESTAD: We had lots of visitors. Until the U-2 incident, we had a tremendous flow of visitors. I had opened up a small restaurant in one of the bays of the old garage. Most of the officers objected to it because it would affect their cost of living allowance if it were found that we had a restaurant which would provide breakfast or lunch at lower rates than otherwise would be available. They went to the Ambassador, asking that the restaurant not be opened. The Ambassador found it hard to understand their position. He knew that the facility would be welcomed by a lot of the staff, particularly the single people, who had to go back to their apartments every day to make their sandwiches. So we opened the restaurant and it was a great addition to the Embassy. It is still there. But it was a problem when the visitors heard about it because they could get bacon and eggs there. They came over to the Embassy for breakfast. We couldn't refuse them since most had seen or would see the Ambassador. It would have been impossible to deny them access to the restaurant. The restaurant operated with non-appropriated funds totally and completely.

The US government supplied the building and the utilities. The fixtures had been gotten from the American exhibition when that was closed. We made a lot of money from the Commissary sales—cigarettes and liquor. That supported the operations of the restaurant. If in some months we would run short in the restaurant, we would use the Commissary surpluses to support it. The restaurant was for Americans only.

Q: How much time did the Embassy devote to visitors?

RIMESTAD: In the summer—June, July and August—it would devote considerable time. If an Embassy officer was in town, he would have to see any visitor who wanted to see him.

Q: Who were these visitors? Businessmen? Congressmen?

RIMESTAD: I am going to say something I have never said before and my comment applies not only to Moscow, but to many foreign service posts. Americans travel to the post, come to the Embassy, sign in—usually want to go to the Economic Section—, ask a couple of questions, get the answers and their business is done. Now the businessman has his trip paid because it becomes tax-deductible expenditure as a business expense. I saw more of that in Paris than in Moscow. Many would sign in, do something that was reasonably official and were never seen again by the Embassy.

We had a number of Congressional visitors. That was when I first met John Rooney, whom I found to be a very nice fellow—contrary to his reputation. He liked to tweak the State Department on such things as too many cars, too many secretaries, plush furniture and those sorts of things. But he always gave us the money.

Q: Rooney had an unusual agenda when he visited Embassies. What did he do in Moscow?

RIMESTAD: In Moscow, he wanted to see the building. I took him through the building. He wanted to go to a typical Russian restaurant. We took him and he thought the food was

terrible. He was in Moscow for three nights—two days. He saw the Ambassador and got a briefing, although he didn't really care for briefings. He just didn't care for them. He had an assistant with him by the name of Jay Howe who took notes and wrote up the trip reports. When we asked whether we could write any of them, he said: “No. Jay will write whatever needs to be written”. He did spend a lot of time in the building and Jay took notes on what a terrible place it was. He went to the garage. We had paved the parking area outside the garage and marked it for badminton and basketball courts. He looked at that and said: “Is this what you got several hundred thousands dollars for?”. I said that it was for the garage building; this was a parking lot. I added: “Mr. Congressman, the markings that you see on the paved area are the latest markings in parking lots”. He laughed and told Jay not to note this innovation.

We also had the Foreign Relations Committee and Agriculture Committee people visiting.

Q: Were these official visitors hard to support?

RIMESTAD: No, because they invariably had contacts already made with the Russians whom they would see. In any case, most of them wanted to leave Moscow as soon as possible and see Leningrad and Kiev. We had enough transportation to support them; if we didn't we would rent cars. We only had four sedans available and needed one or two for the Embassy all the time. We would send cars to meet the official visitors at the airport and bring them back. If they wanted to do some sight-seeing, then we would have to rent cars.

Q: Were the hotels adequate for the visitors?

RIMESTAD: They hated them. But they were the best available. The Ukrania, which was close to the Embassy, was a nice hotel, but it was not a Hilton. Before we close this chapter of my career, I should say that it was a fascinating experience—absolutely fascinating, mainly because we were dealing with another culture—totally and completely

different. You had to remind yourself of that all the time. Just because we do something one way, doesn't make it right. In their viewpoint, their way was correct.

Q: You left Moscow in 1960.

RIMESTAD: Correct. While I was there, we had an inspection. We received a very nice inspection report. When I left Moscow, I returned to Washington with a considerable amount of home leave to my credit. State did not have an immediate assignment for me, but there were a number of openings for which I would be considered. These were to be discussed with me while I was on home leave. I had been in North Dakota for two weeks when I got a frantic call asking me to return to Washington immediately. I was told that there was an assignment for me in Washington. I asked what happened to the overseas opportunities. I was told: “Forget them. You are coming back to Washington”. The Chief Inspector, who had been in Moscow, and who was a very good friend of John Kennedy's, had just been assigned to set up a new Disarmament Agency. The Republicans had been getting a lot of heat that they hadn't established such an Agency. So I was called back to draw-up an organization chart, together with five or six other people, put some boxes on the chart, so that the Republicans could announce that they had established a Disarmament Agency. It took me about two weeks; most of the chart is still valid today, even though it is now thirty years old.

Q: So you were present at the birth of ACDA?

RIMESTAD: I was the third man on board. The first was the Chief inspector I mentioned earlier; then there was another Inspector and a secretary. Then I came on board. We put the organization chart together, some functional statements. I certainly didn't know what it was all about and nobody else did either. But the Agency had be established for political reasons. In a very short time, the election campaign started in earnest and the press releases flowed saying that the Disarmament Agency was in business. No one liked the name. Someone came up with the idea that after the election, the name would have to be

changed. When Kennedy won the election, he appointed John J. McCloy to be the head of the new Agency, which was very nice since I had known him from the High Commission days.

Then the job became one of hiring people. It was hire, hire and then hire some more. We had a military affairs office, which was easy to staff because the military had lots of people. We put the organization together and went to Bill Crockett in State. Bill was very helpful in seeing that we got the staff necessary to run the place. I reciprocated by being very generous in turning administrative funds to him for State's support, since State was always in need of money and we had more than we could use.

Q: What was ACDA's legislative authority at this time?

RIMESTAD: It was being worked on at that time—early 1961. Two things were being worked on: legislative authority and on the SALT Treaty. When I started, the Agency was an integral part of State. They had been in business for ten days. They had a little office with three desks in it, with a big sign on the door saying “Disarmament Agency”. That is all it was. It was strictly a political deal; the Administration just had to get it going. By election time, we had a viable organization; it didn't help the Republicans to get elected, but there was a viable organization. It did blunt some of the criticism because there was a sign over a door showing that some work was being done and there were people working on disarmament.

Q: While you were there, this Agency evolved; it got its own legislative authority and the staff increased.

RIMESTAD: That is right. We had our own appropriation. My main task as Executive Director of the new Agency was to see that we got enough money, office space and personnel—all the things that needed to be done to get an organization going. We also had to insure that we got the right people. The political officers were easy—we got those from State. The military personnel were easy—we got those from Defense. But then there

was an economic group and a technical group which were involved in disarmament and arms control, which consisted mainly of University people.

Q: The Executive Office started as a one-man office. How much did it grow while you were there?

RIMESTAD: In total, the Disarmament Agency went from four people when I joined it to about 150 in a period of four years. Our main problem was the tremendous turnover. The other problem was that the various Directors of the Agency wanted larger staffs. They just wanted more people. The Division chiefs would say that they couldn't use more people. When you got into such matters as the SALT Treaty, much of the nuts and bolts work was done by the Agency, but the more difficult technical questions were contracted out. People would be brought in temporarily to work on a specific project. John McCloy' successor was William Foster. He was after me all the time to increase the staff. He felt that the Agency was not getting enough people. The Division chiefs kept telling me that they had all the people they needed or could use. We had an authorization for 200 positions, but while I was there, we never filled them all. Foster felt that within the government, unless you had size, you would have very little impact.

Q: On the administrative side, did you depend primarily on State for support?

RIMESTAD: No. We had our own personnel office, which hired technical and other personnel. We did our own contracting, particularly for studies, although supplies and such things came from State. I understood that our contracting people would check with their counterparts in State to make sure that they were on the right track. We would also depend on State for the political people that we needed. Sometimes, we asked State for some economists. The large military staff came from DoD. We had our own small public affairs office—some from USIA. We were housed in the old State building, of which we used about one-third. AID will never forgive me for my weekend raid. You have to be quick on your feet in our business. I had heard that there would be space available in the old

part of State. It was going to be divided between AID and us. I learned this on a Saturday and immediately went to Mr. Foster. I told him that on Monday, the space would be divided up. He said: Never mind Monday. Get a hold of our people because we are going to move in today". And so we did. We moved in and took the space we wanted. Foster got the old office of the Secretary. We went in a and worked very hard that weekend. So on Monday, AID was confronted with a fait a compli, unless they wanted to move us out. That is how the Agency got prime space in the building.

Q: You had your own budget. What was your relationship with State and the Bureau of the Budget on financial matters?

RIMESTAD: We led a charmed life, while Kennedy was in power. He was very firm in his support for ACDA. The problem was that we would show our requirements which seemed always much higher than our current staffing. Where we had ten people, we would ask for twenty. BoB would want to know why we had to double that staff. I would turn the question over to the various division chiefs, who would visibly sweat. But they would explain the requested increase. BoB knew that the President supported the Agency and therefore didn't give us a hard time. Under normal circumstances, we would have had a very difficult time. We would also reimburse the other government departments for the people they assigned to us. We never reimbursed the military. We did not reimburse other agencies such as Atomic Energy for people that were temporarily assigned to us, but we did pay State because we thought that we used that Department for so many things —procurement, etc. I would get together with Crockett and we would agree on a round figure. My assignment to ACDA was a major responsibility. I dealt with top people in the White House and other parts of the government. When we needed personnel or services, I was the person who had to do it.

Q: You left ACDA in 1964 and you were then assigned to Paris as Counselor for Administration. How did that assignment come about?

RIMESTAD: I knew that I would have to move sometime in 1964. So I went to Bill Crockett around Christmas 1963 and asked him to keep me in mind for any overseas vacancies that might come open. He told me that Paris would be open in the Spring or Summer. He asked me if I would like that. I told him: “Yes, if I could get it. I would like that”. I don't know what happened in the system, but I got a letter from Personnel saying that I been assigned to Paris. I went to see the Assistant Secretary for EUR with whom I had dealt before—we all knew each other. I was a known commodity. The fact that the Deputy Under Secretary —Crockett—had recommended me for the job carried the day because there were a lot of people interested in the job—most of them could have done it. There are a lot of people in the Foreign Service who can fill any position adequately; you have to be in the right place at the right time. I was neither better nor worse than many others; others might have done the job just as well. But I was certainly qualified, having put together the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. That had been the big leagues.

Q: Paris was a different experience from anything you had done before. How did you find the administrative side of the Embassy?

RIMESTAD: Big and bloated. Paris was going through a very difficult time when I arrived in 1964. Paris had been a huge post. When I got there, there were five Ambassadors and their staffs. We had the Ambassador to France, the Ambassador to OECD, the Ambassador to NATO, the Ambassador to UNESCO and then there was a small economic group which dealt with the Ministry of Finance with about a dozen people which was also headed by an Ambassador. We had to support all of them. These Ambassadors didn't talk to each other; each had his own niche and was separate. They might have talked to Ambassador Bohlen if they had a political problem, but essentially they were little principalities to themselves. Each had its own building a long ways from the Embassy. I visited each of them every week; I went to their staff meetings every week. I would return from these meetings and report to Bohlen if we had any problems—most of them involved space. He didn't really want to know much about them. We got along fine.

Q: Did either Bohlen or Bob McBride, his DCM, interfere with your responsibilities?

RIMESTAD: No. McBride would want me to come up to see him periodically to brief him on what was going on and what my problems were so that he could be prepared if the Ambassador raised any questions. When the issue arose, he had been briefed for a month or two and knew the background. He was very good. We would have lunch often. I would go to his house for dinner and sometimes I would have breakfast with him. I kept him fully apprized. We were going through a shrinking process; we were trying to reduce staff; we were having space problems. We were redoing the Talleyrand building; we were doing a lot of things that were upsetting staff. We had to move them around or cut down on staff. Bob McBride just wanted to know so that if Bohlen raised an issue, he would be prepared to respond immediately instead of having to call me. He would call me after the meeting to make sure that he had told Bohlen the full story. He had a good memory and was almost always right in his responses to the Ambassador. But neither the Ambassador nor the DCM interfered with the administrative support I was providing either to them or the other four Ambassadors. Through my experiences in the salary-wage area, the Moscow Embassy and ACDA, I had become familiar with the administrative problems. They are usually the same wherever you are. Only the location varies.

Q: That is an interesting observation. Did you find a pattern of recurring problems that you confronted both in Moscow and in Paris?

RIMESTAD: Yes. Space, for example. In Moscow it was both living and office space. In Paris it was office space. We provided living space in Paris for about two-thirds of the Embassy staff. The other one-third went out on their own.

Q: How did you feel about the policy of government-provided housing in a post like Paris?

RIMESTAD: In Paris, we made a big mistake when we sold the Rhone Hotel. Cecil Lyon sold it because he didn't want the Embassy involved in housekeeping. It was a facility

with seventy-eighty small apartments. We sold it for a good price, but then had to pay three times as much to lease other space. In a Paris which has such a high proportion of communication and secretarial personnel—lower wage employees—, it is not practicable to ask them to find and pay for their own housing. The government has to get the housing for them. It makes for a more orderly way to transfer people to a post like Paris. Senior officers usually have sufficient allowances to pay for their quarters, but in Paris they were all in government housing. I agreed with that policy. Middle rank officers—FSO-3 and above—had adequate allowances to find their own housing. But there are two kinds of officers—the ones who abhor any kind of government housing—that is about one-third; the other two-thirds prefer government-provided housing. The trouble with the latter is that you cannot always meet the preference of each officer and his wife. In a government owned or leased apartment house, all apartments are roughly of the same size, so that an FSO-2 and a FSS-6 get roughly the same apartments. There isn't anything you can do about it.

Q: As a general policy, for those officers who had adequate allowances, you supported private leases.

RIMESTAD: I would support it in Paris, Rome, London—the bigger posts, but not in the smaller posts.

Q: Were there any tensions among the various US agencies in Paris because of the housing situation?

RIMESTAD: Yes; it was always a struggle. They would all ask whether they were getting their fair share. Out in Neuilly, we had some two-bedroom places and some three-bedroom places. Everyone was assigned to that complex. If it was just a couple without children, we would not assign them to a three bedroom apartment regardless of rank. We needed the three bedrooms for families. Private housing was available; that is true in most European capitals. You just have to look for it. If you rent your own place, you are more apt to be satisfied with it than if it is government-provided. I saw people renting apartments

on the left bank, which, if the government had provided, they would have had a fit. But having rented the apartment themselves, they found it unique and interesting—right off St. Germain where all the “action” in Paris took place. The government would have trouble putting these people into such apartments because they would have objected. But having found the place themselves, they were happy.

Some of these problems are of course related to the allowances. For an FSO-3 or above, the allowances are such that he or she can afford to rent his or her own place. There is much to be said for letting people do as much of their own renting as possible. All the complaining nonsense stops. If something goes wrong with the water heater, it is their problem; they can complain to the landlord. The officer understands that.

Q: How many U.S. Government Americans were there in Paris when you got there?

RIMESTAD: There were 2,450 Americans.

Q: Was there much interaction among them, either professionally or socially?

RIMESTAD: The five groups I mentioned before were entities unto themselves. Sometime, the NATO political officers would seek the assistance of the Embassy. But essentially they were all independent. There were very few social interactions. Practically none. I would get invited to all the parties, but I think I was unique in the Embassy. The Ambassador and the DCM got courtesy invitations, but they never went. The Ambassador would send courtesy invitations to the other four Ambassadors, but they would never come. I was in fact the linkage among the five groups.

Q: Were any efforts from the other four units to pull away from the Embassy' support?

RIMESTAD: No. Not while I was there. No one ever mentioned the thought to me. The main reason was that they all had good office space. All were in nice offices. The only thing they might have done on their own would have been the logistic support and that

was no problem. We had enough space and personnel services to satisfy them. They all had their own cars. Each Ambassador had his own car; NATO probably had a half dozen cars; OECD probably had two and UNESCO had one. The Embassy serviced them, but each unit garaged its own cars. The Embassy provided personnel, procurement, general services. Each of these four units had one American executive officer; they had no other administrative staff. They would come to the Embassy to get whatever they needed.

Q: Did you draw some conclusions from your experiences in Paris concerning the general management of overseas establishments?

RIMESTAD: Yes. I felt that Paris and all big Embassies were too big, too many people. We did too much business from these Embassies. We should be more like the Europeans. If there was a problem, some one from the Department in the capital city should be sent. With communications and transportation having made such giant strides, an official can be at an overseas post the next day to work on a problem. We used to be kidded a lot by the Germans and the British and the Scandinavians—they would ask what we did with all of these hundreds of people. Why didn't they stay in Washington? When you needed them you could bring them over. I think there is a lot to be said for that. In Paris, 22% of the people in the Embassy were State personnel. The other 78% belonged to other U.S. Government agencies. Every US agency pushes to get into foreign affairs and to put its people overseas. The Paris representatives of many of these agencies didn't have enough to keep them occupied. They could take care of a problem when it arose. But so could have their representatives if they had flown from Washington. Such a system would not have required the officer and his family to be in Paris with all the costs involved. We should rethink the size of these Embassies and their functions because of the vast improvements in communications and transportation facilities today.

Q: While we are on that issue, have you reached any conclusions about State Department's ability to support domestic agencies, like Treasury, Agriculture, Commerce

and USTR, for example? Could a better staffed Foreign Service do a lot of the work for which the domestic agencies send their own people overseas?

RIMESTAD: Of course it could. But all these agencies have vested interests. They will go to their death before they surrender their overseas representation. When I was in Washington, we had a big fight with the Social Security Administration. It wanted to put three officers in Athens to pass out checks. Then they would also spot check to make sure that the deliveries were accurate. I told them they didn't need to do that. We had people who were perfectly able to do that. SSA wouldn't buy and it got BoB to agree with it. I don't know how they got BoB to agree, but they got their three officers to Athens to distribute social security checks. If you are going to do that in Athens, why not in Poland where there are many retirees? There were a lot in Italy, too. Their answer was: “We'll get to those countries”. Every major Department in Washington has people overseas. Commerce, Labor, AEC, all of them, have a foreign affairs staff which they have built up over the course of the last twenty-five years. It is absolutely unnecessary. Perhaps back in the sailing ship days, there may have had some justification. But today you can get anywhere overnight, particularly in Europe; with the fax machines and other communication improvements, there just isn't any reason for the proliferation. But I don't know how one gets ahold of it because you have to tackle every major government agency in Washington.

Q: You attribute the changed circumstances particularly to improvements in communications and transportation. Let me ask you about the Foreign Service itself. I gather you believe that the Foreign Service could perform a lot of these functions, like the passing out of social security checks. Why do you think that the Foreign Service is not used more by government agencies?

RIMESTAD: I don't think that it stems from any opposition to the Foreign Service as such. It is more a question of each agency building up its own little entity. I have never heard

any criticism, except from Commerce. Commerce never did like State being so heavily involved in commercial work.

Q: How long were you in Paris?

RIMESTAD: I arrived in June, 1964 and left in January, 1967 when I was appointed Deputy Under Secretary for Administration.

Q: How did that come about?

RIMESTAD: I didn't know anybody in the White House until I was asked by Bill Crockett to go to New Zealand to advance President Johnson's visit to that country. In late 1966, the President went on a long journey throughout Southeast Asia. Some posts like Wellington needed help when it came to major events such as Presidential visits and Crockett asked me to be the control officer. I got Bill's call about three weeks before the President was scheduled to arrive in Wellington. So I hurried to New Zealand.

There were about 400 people expected to accompany the President. Two-thirds of those were either communicators or from the media. Where would we house such a large contingent in a small city like Wellington? The racing season was on at that time and the most we could find was twenty-two rooms in a hotel. That was the maximum. I was sitting in the Ambassador's office looking out on the waters and I saw a ferryboat. The Ambassador said that it traveled to and from the South Island on an overnight voyage. I asked whether it had sleeping room? He said: “Yes. You can sleep two-hundred and fifty people on it”. The light came on. I asked him whether we could get hold of the ferry operator to do some business. Fortunately, the company was just bringing in a boat which needed rehabilitation, which would then be sent to Hong Kong to ferry passengers and cars there. So we made a deal with the ferry boat owner. We rented the boat, although for longer than we wanted because their union contract required it. The operator put sheets on the beds and fixed it all up. So when the President's entourage arrived, there were sleeping quarters for everybody. The guests were a little surprised when they found they

had to sleep on a ferryboat, but they did. Marvin Watson, who was President Johnson's chief honcho for these trips, called me and told me that he thought the ferry rental was brilliant. He said that back in Washington, people didn't think we could pull off something like this and that all hell would have broken loose when the President arrived in Wellington. He had heard that everybody was to go to an Army barracks. Watson said: “You know what would have happened if the media had to be put in Army barracks!”. The visit went well and it had its interesting moments. I got a call one night—about midnight. It was from Bill Crockett, asking me if had the wreath for the next day's ceremonies. I said: “Yes. I asked my supply officer to get it”. Bill asked: “Have you seen it? Please go see it and then call me back”. So I went to the supply officer and got him out of bed. He said: “I don't have it. It will be delivered at eight o'clock in the morning”. I told him I wanted to see it now. He answered that I should tell the Presidential party that that couldn't be done. I told him to get out of bed and get that wreath right then and there because it had to be at the site at 7:30 in the morning. So the wreath-maker was awakened and he made the wreath and delivered it that night. That was my first lesson in Presidential visits: never take anybody's word for anything—verify it yourself.

The party left for Canberra. I got a call from there asking me whether I would join the Presidential party for the rest of the trip, working as a liaison between the top White House staff and the State Department supply and procurement people. That is how I became acquainted with the White House. If Marvin Watson wanted something, he would call me. If Moyers wanted something, he would call me. They were really never too demanding. It was mostly little stuff. But at least they had a name they could call. So we became acquainted. But how and when the decision was made that Bill Crockett would vacate the Deputy Under Secretary position and who would replace him, I never knew nor found out. I presume that Crockett made a recommendation to Watson. I doubt whether he just gave one name; it was probably a short list of three or four. By that time, I knew Marvin Watson and he knew me. But to this day, I don't know the process that led to my selection.

Q: What about the Secretary and the Under Secretary? Did you know them at all?

RIMESTAD: I was just a name to both of them. After my return to Paris after the Presidential trip—on Christmas Eve—I got a call from the White House. I don't remember whether it was from President Johnson or Marvin Watson. It may have been Johnson, although he usually would not make this kind of a call. Whoever it was said that the President wanted to see me the next day. I pointed out that the next day was Christmas. So the meeting was postponed until the day after. I flew back, reported to the State Department and then went over to the White House—that was probably two days after Christmas. I saw the President in the Oval Office. He asked me what my political affiliation was. I told him that I was apolitical. He said: “Fine”.

Q: The appointment was then actually a Presidential appointment as the “book” says it should be?

RIMESTAD: Yes. I didn't see the Secretary or the Under Secretary until days later. I think the Secretary was a little miffed. I told him that I took my orders from the President. He had told me to return to Washington. I did and I went to see him as instructed. After seeing the President I stayed in Washington for a couple of weeks with nothing happening. I finally went to Bill Crockett and told him that I might as well return to Paris. I felt it was silly to stay in Washington and keep out of sight. There was a lot of speculation about who was going to be the new Deputy Under Secretary. It was well known that Crockett was leaving. So Bill called Marvin Watson who told him he would check the question out. Later that day, Bill and I were having lunch in the Executive Dining Room when on the ticker tape appeared a White House announcement that I had been nominated for the job. That is how I learned that I had been appointed—from a yellow ticker tape sheet. Nobody had said anything to me. That is the way a lot of Johnson's actions were taken. He made the decisions and told others later. I don't know why he felt so strongly about the

Deputy Under Secretary position, except that was obviously a job that he, and no one else, wanted to control.

Q: I assume that in part it had to do with overseas trips during which he relied heavily on Bill Crockett and the Department's administrative staff.

RIMESTAD: That was certainly part of it. The other aspect had to do with ambassadorial appointments.

Q: Let me pursue your relationship with the President a little more. Did you escort him on other overseas trips?

RIMESTAD: Yes. I went with him to Adenauer's funeral. I still have some pictures of you and me out at the airport when the President arrived. One could probably write a book on every one of the President's trips because he was unpredictable and arbitrary about his demands. For example, on the question of selecting housing. In Bonn, as you will recall, he chose the DCM's house. Did that create a fuss! But not with Johnson and Watson; they had no problems.

Q: I believe that this was a particularly difficult trip because the President had no schedule except for the funeral. He had a lot of free time on his hands.

RIMESTAD: That's right. He was interested in art works and everything else. I remember that a lot of artwork was brought to the residence for him to view. I never saw it, but apparently there was a lot of stuff there. I know that he took a lot back with him. That was my experience with is art interests. I went with the President to Punta Del Este and I went with him on a visit to all the countries of Central America. We also went to Saigon and Danang. We went around the world on that trip and stopped in Rome. Johnson didn't want to see the President of Italy—that was a mess. These trips were heady because you had no forewarning about what he wanted to do. He was absolutely mercurial.

Q: But the President treated you well?

RIMESTAD: I had an excellent relationship with him. Only once did he call me to chew me out—it was in the middle of the night. I had made a terrible mistake. I had been told by some of my staff that there was a vacancy coming up as Administrator of the Bureau of Consular Affairs. The staff wanted Barbara Watson appointed. She was an Afro-American. They pointed out that this appointment would be a real plus for the Department. So I issued a press release, never realizing that that job was a Presidential appointment. No one had told me and I wasn't smart enough to ask the right questions. My staff later said that I hadn't asked whether that job was a Presidential appointment. I told them: “Come on now! A presidential appointment and I issue a press release! Does that sound reasonable?'. Anyway, the President called me about one o'clock in the morning. He had stayed up and had read it. He said: “Don't ever do that again! If it is a Presidential appointment, I announce it! How in the world am I going to get a black woman out of that job. I have other candidates for that job. Now there is nothing I can do about that. Don't ever do that again!”. That was that.

Q: So your main White House contact was Marvin Watson?

RIMESTAD: Yes, and then later on, Jim Jones. I had other calls from the President. Always on personnel. The Department had a system in which five senior officers would sit together to pick a panel of candidates for various Ambassadorial appointments, which then would be sent to the White House for Presidential selection. The Under Secretary, the Deputy Under Secretary for Political Affairs, myself, the Assistant Secretary for the region concerned and one other would agree on a panel of names. I would put the papers together and send them to the White House. One late evening I got a call from the President. He said that he knew the Department was going to send him a list of names for a certain ambassadorial position. He told me to delete one of the names and add another name that he gave me, in lieu. He added that it was not necessary to tell anybody about the shift. He repeated: “You understand that? It is not necessary to tell anybody about

this". So I called my staff man in and told him to come in at five o'clock the next morning together with his secretary to type the necessary papers. He told me: "You can't do that". I said: " What do you mean I can't do it. The President has instructed me to do it! You want me to tell the President he can't have that name on the list. It is after all a Presidential appointment". So we did that; we forwarded the panel of names including the President's man. About three days later, he named his candidate. All hell broke loose. I got a call from the Secretary who was livid—he was furious. Alex Johnson was livid; everybody was furious because they thought I had pulled a fast one. The Secretary said that he would not tolerate having a staff that was not trustworthy. So I told the Secretary that before the discussion got completely out of hand and things would be said that we would regret later, I should tell him that three nights earlier I had received a call from the President instructing me precisely on what to do, including not discussing it with anybody. I pointed out that since I had then told the Secretary, that I was in hot water with the President if he discussed this matter outside his office. He asked me: "Did the President say that?". I answered: "Yes". The Secretary said that he didn't know the President's choice. Then he said: "Thank you very much" and his face was tomato red. That was the last I heard of that saga.

The President would often call to ask whether a specific person's name was on the list being sent to him. His questions were always about personnel. But he never asked that we place someone in the Department. Sometimes the White House staff would try that and then I would check it with Marvin Watson. Invariably, he would tell me not to do anything about the request. The President and Watson didn't want the White House staff doing that. The President felt that if his staff called, it should have been at his behest, not theirs.

Q: In that connection, it is interesting to note that in a book by Secretary Rusk, which has just been published, he said "I did wrestle with the White House staff and occasionally President Kennedy over Ambassadorial appointments. There were always 10% or 15%

who were old-fashioned political appointments. Among these, we would always pick a few dogs". Was that your experience with the Johnson people?

RIMESTAD: No. I would say that only one ambassadorial appointment was controversial and that was the one in the episode I relayed earlier. As I said, Johnson would often call to find out who was on the list or who were we considering. But that is all I would hear. It never carried any further. The Secretary or the Under Secretary would come to the ambassadorial panel meetings and tell us that they had a very good candidate. That was a clear message. When the choice would be made for some minor European post, there was never any argument; we knew that who ever would be appointed, would be someone that the President selected for his own purposes. But the Department accepted that and it was never a problem.

Q: Did you have contacts with the Secretary or the Under Secretary on other management issues besides personnel?

RIMESTAD: Not with the Secretary; never with the Secretary. But I had a lot of meetings with Under Secretary Katzenbach. He was followed by Elliot Richardson. Katzenbach would be interested in a very broad brush way; if it was a more specific issue, he would turn it over to ne of his assistants. These matters were spot items that had arisen somewhere or that I had raised with the Under Secretary. But I never discussed a general management issue either with the Secretary or either of the Under Secretaries (Richardson or Katzenbach). I did see Secretary Rogers several times, but he never got involved in broad management questions. Richardson did; he liked to philosophize. He liked to talk about where we should be going. He had some very smart staff—and they would join the conversation. I don't think the Secretary's staff was nearly as well tuned in as Richardson's. Richardson had a good, retentive mind. I got some guidance from those conversations with the Under Secretary. I always felt that the personnel process was in good shape. During my successor's—Bill Macomber—period, the American Foreign Service Association took over the direction of the personnel system to an extent I would

not ever have tolerated. They tried to do that while I was in the job and I just refused. One time I took Lannon Walker aside and said: “You see that certificate on the wall signed by the President. I think you will see my name on the top. Where in that certificate does it say that I am to abdicate my responsibilities to the Foreign Service Association? It doesn't and I don't intend to do it!”. So AFSA and I had an adversarial relationship; very much so. I think they were wrong. I think the whole system is now wrong; it is now so contrived that they think that the whole system can be run without human hands touching it. They think it can be run by all these rules and regulations. It doesn't work that way. People run things; organizations don't run anything. Chairs, tables and charts can't run anything. It is people. If you get the right people in the right jobs, you'll have a good operation. Conversely, if you have the wrong people, no structure or organization chart will help. It will not work. Today, the Department has a personnel system so devised that rules and regulations will run it. It won't; it can't. Today's system is terribly complicated.

Q: If people make a good organization, as you have suggested, how do you develop the right persons to fill the right positions at the right time?

RIMESTAD: My experience has been that as an officer develops, you give him or her increasing responsibilities. That will develop them. Take Larry Eagleburger. I knew Larry when he was a young officer sitting at a desk writing letters. But he was sharp, smart; a guy with a good intellect and a good feel for people when I knew him in his youth. He may have changed now, but twenty years ago he had good human relationships. You spotted him right away as a “comer”. You could also spot younger officers whose life would never be long enough for them to reach the senior ranks.

Q: Let's use Eagleburger as an illustration. Should the personnel system devote time to developing an officer like him or would the customary assignment process be sufficient to insure that he would rise to the top?

RIMESTAD: In Eagleburger's case, he was in the Secretary's office; he was known as a guy who would produce; when you gave him an assignment, it would be completed in a most satisfactory manner on an expeditious basis. We got a call one day that Kissinger was looking for some staff and the name Eagleburger had come up. The question was whether the Department would make him available for the NSC assignment. I said: “Hell, yes. If they want him, that is where we want him!”. I later found out that my approval wasn't really being asked; the decision had already been made and the phone call was pro forma. I had told my people that such assignments were a good deal for the Department; when someone like Larry, who knew the Department, could be assigned to the NSC, that would rebound to our benefit. A lot of people might resent such an assignment. Larry was in the right spot at the right time; he got to be known and he was selected because he was known. You can go to any organization and find that nine-tenths of the personnel selections are made because someone knows that a particular individual can produce. That doesn't mean that every selection will be the right one—the Peter Principle certainly will govern some of those selections. In general, however, I think such a system is a far, far better one than the system in existence today which is based on the assumption that you can eliminate that personal factor in the assignment process.

Q: Larry Eagleburger was one of your successors. When he was appointed, he had not been well grounded in the management-administrative operations of the Department. Did that give you any concern?

RIMESTAD: No, because the job of Under Secretary for Management was not the same as that of Deputy Under Secretary for Administration. Macomber took the guts out of the Deputy Under Secretary's job. He gave a lot of the functions to the Under Secretary (later Deputy Secretary). Look at the organization chart of today and compare it to the way it was twenty years ago; they are entirely different. The Under Secretary today is responsible for the over-all management of the Department, including the Foreign Service Institute. He has nothing to do with the day-to-day operation of the Department, whereas

in my days, I was responsible for personnel, budget, security, general services and all the other administrative functions of the Department. That isn't true today. So Larry's job was different from the one I had. It was one for which he was well qualified and would do well. He is a good thinker.

Q: You attribute to Macomber this change in the responsibilities of the Department's top management-administrative guy. What is that Macomber did that changed the nature of the job?

RIMESTAD: He acquiesced in what the Foreign Service Association wanted. They had had so much trouble with me and my predecessors that they wanted their issues raised at the next higher level and Macomber allowed that to happen. All the Deputy Under Secretary had left were the planning and management work. A lot of the day-to-day decisions on administrative matters were in fact transferred to the Under Secretary's office. Several years ago, I was in Washington at a lunch with a number of Congressmen from the Foreign Relations and Budget Committees. They wanted to know why in my days and in Crockett's days the discussions were about the over-all business of State. After that, all the State officials wanted to talk about was travel allowances, overtime, women getting paid. The only subjects on Department's officials' minds were perks, nothing but perks. I said: “That is the new Foreign Service!”.

Q: Tell us about your relationships with the Congress when you were the Deputy Under Secretary?

RIMESTAD: My relationships with Congressmen were excellent. I spent time with them. I spent a lot of time going to the Hill and dropping in on people like Congressmen Fascell, Hayes, Rooney, Smith, etc. I would just stop by and tell them that I was just passing by and was there anything I could do for them? They liked that. They often gave me a cup of coffee and we would chat a little. A month never went by that I didn't spend at least two days walking the halls of Congress. I did the same thing with Senator McClellan and his

staff. He had a son who had been killed in war and we would commiserate about that. I didn't go to see Senator Fulbright because Johnson hated him with a passion. I didn't want it to be known that I had seen Fulbright.

Q: At budget time, did you discuss at least the general outlines of the Department's requests with Rooney and McClellan? Were these mostly briefing sessions or did you also use them to find out what would be approved and what wouldn't be?

RIMESTAD: It was essentially a matter of letting them feel that they were involved and knowledgeable before the budget was actually sent to them. I would ask if they had any problems with any part of it. They appreciated the briefing. They liked to know the answers before they asked the questions.

Q: But Rooney would still berate you and other witnesses at hearing time?

RIMESTAD: Yes. Rooney had a technique. It didn't take long to catch on to it. Rooney would ask: “How many cars do you have in post X or Y or Z?”. He loved to ask about cars. Or he would ask about housing, particularly about some apartments that he had seen during one of his trips which he thought were too plush. A lot of the questions had nothing to do with the budget—nothing. But the budget would come through unscathed. But Rooney would have his fun; he would get his digs at the Department in the newspapers. Frank Bow, who was the ranking minority member on the appropriations subcommittee, was not that type. I saw him as often as I saw John Rooney. He was very appreciative of my visits and my briefings. I always got a big glass of bourbon out of Senator Young of North Dakota, who was on the Senate Appropriations Committee. The members of Congress are human too; they like to know that you know who they are and where they fit in the system and that you are paying attention to them. I never had any business with Fulbright; he dealt with the substantive side of the Department and gave them all a fit. He was not interested in administrative matters.

Sometimes, I would go to John Rooney's house—he didn't live too far away from us. One time, a Congressman from Chicago was giving us a hard time, because he thought that we hadn't treated one of his constituents correctly. So I went to see Rooney and he told me he would take care of it. I never heard another word about the matter. Most of the State Department staff didn't understand why it was necessary to cultivate these Congressmen and Senators. They felt it was demeaning. They never understood that they were important parts of the U.S. Government and that someone from the Executive Branch had to liaison with them—good, warm relationships. These Congressmen had to feel that they could call me by my first name. I would address them as “Senator” or “Congressman”, but they had to be able to call me “Idar”. Only with Rooney did I use his first name. A lot of the State officials never understood the necessity for developing a personal relationship.

Q: You did say that Rooney would, in general, approve the funding requests that the Department would submit? His hearings therefore were primarily for the record?

RIMESTAD: Yes. He would see me after his presentations on the floor of the House and say to me: “ What did you think of that? I got that one good, didn't I ?”. We had a lot of supplemental budgets; he never touched them. He appropriated exactly what we had asked for. Again, we would go to him before submitting the budgets and tell him what the supplementals would contain. We would show them to him. They used to go through on a consent calendar.

Q: What was your assessment of the Congressional views of the Foreign Service during the late 60's?

RIMESTAD: Many thought the Foreign Service to be “cookie pushers”. Too prissy. They would go to an Embassy and see our officers there with blue jackets, gray pants and red ties standing properly. They didn't like that. The Congressmen weren't farmers, but most were down-to-earth and didn't appreciate the “Ivy League” look. I would say that

the majority of Congress did not speak highly of the working level staff of the Department and the Foreign Service. I never heard them be derogatory; they didn't do that. But they didn't say anything nice; that told you their views. But you could never accuse them of bad-mouthing the Foreign Service; they didn't do that.

Q: Did you escort Rooney on his trips?

RIMESTAD: On lots of them. They were difficult because he never wanted to see the Ambassador. He would if you forced him into it. He would have to see the DCM. He had a set pattern. When he came to Paris, he wanted to see the garage. So we took him to the garage which was a mess because we were in the middle of a move. He would say: “Can't you guys do anything right? Can't you clean up this thing?”. He would want to go out to Neuilly to see the apartments. Never came into the Embassy. He was there three days and never came into the Embassy. He would make extended trips—to Paris, to Rome, etc. I went with him to Rome and didn't go into the Embassy there. He wanted to see the Pope and we got that done, which was quite a deal. John Rooney said: “ I was entitled to that” because he had helped pass an appropriation to rebuild Monte Cassino.

But at every post, he had certain pet projects he wanted to see. You could count on it that during some speech that he would give when our appropriations bill was being considered, these things would come up—they were little, nit-picking things. Rooney was difficult because he was so demanding in terms of late night hours, restaurants and other personal requirements.

Q: How about President Johnson's and his White House staff's view of the Foreign Service?

RIMESTAD: He didn't trust the Foreign Service. He didn't; President Kennedy obviously didn't. I don't know about Carter. Nixon obviously didn't. Presidents don't like the Foreign

Service because they don't understand it. They like the people in the system whom they know, but as a Service, they didn't trust it.

Q: Is the Foreign Service so different from other bureaucracies?

RIMESTAD: No, Departments like Commerce or Agriculture only have to deal with a small number of members of Congress. Those Departments can focus on them. State, on the other hand, needs to worry about all 535 members, all of whom become foreign affairs experts when they travel. The Department must make extraordinary efforts to cultivate all members. When a Foreign Service officer, who might be from Iowa, returns from an overseas tour, he or she should go see his or her Congressperson. They don't, but they should. They should develop that one-on-one contact which makes friends.

Q: Let me ask you about your views of the role of management-administration in the Department of State. You followed a Deputy Under Secretary who had difficulties with the Foreign Service because of some of the management systems he wanted to introduce into the Department. What was the situation when you took over the job? How was the job viewed and how were you viewed personally?

RIMESTAD: The system was apprehensive. I never had a warm, friendly relationship with Assistant Secretaries and Deputy Under Secretaries. They don't like administration. They didn't like me because I was in administration. I was the guy who would tell them what they couldn't do. Interestingly enough, I had excellent working relationships with Llewellyn Thompson, Dick Davis, Chip Bohlen and Bob McBride. These were fellows, who, when I was nominated for the position of Deputy Under Secretary, gave me full support. Rusk called all of them and they were apparently very laudatory. But the people with whom I had not served were obviously apprehensive.

Q: Did you make any efforts to overcome that apprehension?

RIMESTAD: I don't think I made enough. There were so many issues on my desk that I couldn't spend enough time with them. I spent a disproportionate amount of time working with Congress and the White House. I should have cut off some of that and spent more time with my State colleagues. But I had lunch with a lot of the Assistant Secretaries and Deputy Under Secretaries and others. But I also think that from the time a junior officer joins the Service, he is told by his elders to watch out for the administrative types —"they would do you no good". The consequences were that there was no support for administration at the junior or mid-career levels. There wasn't a single member of the American Foreign Service Association Board that had any sympathy to administration or its problems. Not one.

Q: You raised the subject of time. This seems to be a particularly difficult problem for people in the Deputy Under Secretary position. What is the problem and what are possible solutions?

RIMESTAD: I felt that there was not enough time to adequately focus on an issue or problem. You had to pick and choose; I would berate myself for not having been on the Hill recently. I just felt that I had to see the Congressmen who were important to us. You couldn't only see them when a bill of interest to the Department was about to be brought to the floor. That would have been too obvious. You had to see them when there wasn't an issue before them just to touch base with them. But I probably should have spent more time with Department officials. But I had to make a choice and I felt that people outside the Department were more important. I didn't really have much sympathy at the time for the "cry babies"—the Departmental people who would be complaining about this and that. There was always something that they wanted. When I suggested that they go see their own Assistant Secretary, they would say that they couldn't get by him. Maybe there is a problem in the whole system, but it certainly starts at the junior levels when the new members of the Service are advised to watch out for the administrative staffs. From the time they graduated from the Foreign Service Institute and were given their first

assignments, they had a mind set to distrust administration and the people in it. They had already learned to resent the administrative people for having so much authority. Officers who carry power in the system and who moved up in the ranks, understood administration. Very rarely did I find an Assistant Secretary or Deputy Assistant Secretary who didn't understand my point of view. He may not have liked it, but he did appreciate my problem and would try to be helpful. But below that level, it was a real minefield.

Q: In light of your comments, what is the answer to the problem of spreading the then Deputy Under Secretary (now Under Secretary) position too thin? Is there a solution to "over-load"?

RIMESTAD: In order to function in that job, you had to know something about personnel, security, budget, building, etc because the Deputy Under Secretary was responsible for all those functions. My objection to today's system is that the Department has taken those responsibilities away from the Under Secretary for Management so that he has no feel for the day-to-day situation. None of these administrative functions go through him. He really is divorced from reality and works in the blue skies. In my days, I knew what was going on in each of the administrative areas. I would come to work at seven in the morning and rarely left before seven at night. I would go back to my conference room and read and do the work I had to do uninterruptedly. I did a lot of business over lunches and breakfasts with the staff. But when you are dealing with thousands of people, you can only scratch the surface. But I did find that the people I got to know in Moscow and in Paris and in Germany to some extent, all became pretty good friends.

Q: How did the position of Assistant Secretary for Administration get re-established?

RIMESTAD: That was strictly a political move. When I became the Deputy Under Secretary, there was no Assistant Secretary position—it having been abolished by Bill Crockett at an earlier time.

By April 1969, it was obvious to me that I was not in tune with the new Nixon Administration and I decided to leave the position of Deputy Under Secretary. It would have just become more painful if I had continued. Too many times I would send memos to the Secretary or Under Secretary for decisions and they would be passed on to some staff level person. So I went to Secretary Rogers and told him that I thought it would be best for all concerned if I left. There was an Ambassadorial opening in Geneva which would be available in the Fall and I told him that I would like that post. He said he would get back to me. A couple of weeks later, Rogers told me that I could go to Geneva, but that White House clearance would be required which would be forthcoming sometime in the Summer. I then briefed Frank Bow on the situation, because he had told me back in January or February that Bill Macomber was trying very hard to become the Deputy Under Secretary. He had been on the Hill mounting Congressional support. But all the people he spoke to wanted to know what would happen to me—these people had become friends of mine by that time. So I went to talk to Bow and he asked me what would happen to Frank Meyer, who was working for me at that time. I told him that I didn't know. Bow asked whether Frank could become an Assistant Secretary. I responded that I hadn't thought of it, but anything was possible if that were his desire. Bow said: “That is what I want”. I reported that conversation to Rogers and Richardson and I expressed the view that Macomber might have a difficult time being confirmed unless Meyer was made an Assistant Secretary. I had operated as Deputy Under Secretary without an Assistant Secretary, which may have been part of the reason for the very heavy workload that fell on my position. I had taken the administrative structure as it was. If I had had an Assistant Secretary, I would still have had Personnel report to me, but as for budget, security and general housekeeping, that could have come under the purview of the Assistant Secretary. But I would have had to keep Personnel, the Bureau of Consular Affairs, the Foreign Service Institute and to some extent, the budget operations, particularly in the final stages of formulation—I had to be involved in that. The rest could have been supervised by an Assistant Secretary and that would have eased my work-load considerably.

Q: That last comment suggests that you saw your responsibilities to be primarily personnel and budget.

RIMESTAD: That is correct. We had to have the money and we had to be sure that the personnel system was working with efficiency—that the right people were being assigned to the right jobs. Let's face it: an Assistant Secretary doesn't necessarily have the right judgement on whom he is placing in jobs. I am thinking particularly of Latin America which staffed with a lot of “old hands” whom they assigned to jobs that just weren't appropriate for the officer. But the Bureau would never publicly admit these misassignments.

Q: As you know, the Department has been going back and forth from the days it was founded about whom should be given responsibility for assignments: a central office or each regional bureau. Every few years it swings back from one system to the other. What are your views?

RIMESTAD: I think it should be the responsibility of a central Personnel office, with a large input from the Bureaus. Bureaus have a tendency to have the “old boy” syndrome because too many of the senior officers in a Bureau have buddies whom they want to bring along with them. EUR especially suffered from this syndrome. That is not good for the personnel system. Chip Bohlen had some people that he took care of. He used to give me hell when I was in “O” because I wouldn't follow his recommendations on some of his people.

Q: What does that syndrome say about the Foreign Service as an institution? In the late 60s, what did you consider the strengths and weaknesses of the Service to be?

RIMESTAD: The Service includes some tremendously capable people. Given lead, it does a very good job. But the Service suffers from its poor relationships with the rest of the Government. Those parts do not understand the Foreign Service; they don't understand its functions. It is a big void to them. The Service must make a major effort to let the rest of the Government, and particularly Congress, know what and how it does.

Q: There is another continual debate in the Department and that is whether the Service should be staffed with generalists or specialists. What are your views?

RIMESTAD: I was a specialist who became a generalist. But it would have been a big mistake to make me Ambassador to Italy. I think it is a big mistake to put some of the political appointees in these very sensitive Ambassadorial positions because they have not been nurtured in the political and economic environment that you need in a lot of these jobs. There are of course a lot of posts where the Ambassador has essentially a management job and where he or she is supported by good technical people. In that kind of post, a manager can often do a far superior job than a political officer who can't manage.

The decision to assign one kind of person over another to certain ambassadorial positions varies from year to year. If there is a country with political or economic problems either internally or with the United States—such as India, for example—it should be filled with someone well versed in the diplomatic problems that exist between it and Pakistan and it and the U.S. That is not a job for a manager. It is job for someone with international political and economic experience. The same is true with a lot of the Third World countries. The management of a large Embassy such as we have in New Delhi can be left to the DCM. The political and economic problems that India has are so acute that a mistake would be made if the Department assigned a manager to try to make sense of and influence the situation.

Q: So the major question for you is what are our relationships with the country rather than what is the content of our program?

RIMESTAD: My question always was: “What are we looking at today?”. The answer to that question changes periodically. In Thailand and in most of the smaller European countries, you can get by with managers. There is no compelling reason to put an economist or political officer in those jobs. All you need is someone with fairly decent judgment. But

you can't generalize even for the same post. What is right for a post one year, may not be the following. Czechoslovakia might be a good illustration. The right Ambassador before the revolution would have been one person; following it, it probably should have been someone else. After the revolution, I would have saved that post for a Czechoslovakian expert. There are real problems coming up in that country and I am sure the Department has sent a DCM and other officers well versed in Czechoslovakian matters to back up Mrs. Black. She is a very nice person; she used to come to see me in the Department, but she certainly is not a Czechoslovakian expert.

Q: This discussion raises the question of developing managers in the Foreign Service. What were your views on that subject?

RIMESTAD: I believed that a variety of experiences could develop managers, starting with an assignment to a small post and moving on to larger ones. The officer must have “hands-on” experience; you won't learn management of the Foreign Service in school. It would be nice if the officer had a business administration degree, but someone with that degree doesn't want to start at the bottom; because of the education that person wants to start higher up. But if an officer starts at a small post and gradually is moved up, then he or she will have the right experience. Once you have been at a major post—it doesn't have to be a big one—you will have seen all the problems. The management issues in The Hague are no different than they are in Paris. The Paris embassy is just larger, but the problems are the same.

Q: I gather from your comments that you think that there shouldn't be a debate about specialists and generalists, but that the Department needs some of each?

RIMESTAD: Absolutely. The Department needs both. To say otherwise, shows an ignorance of the system and the problems.

Q: How should the system insure that there are cadre of personnel in sufficient numbers to specialize in any one of the many areas of expertise needed by the Department?

RIMESTAD: It should bring younger officers up in each of the areas, particularly those that have difficult languages. You start them out as a third secretary, then you bring him or her back as chief of the political section and later on as the DCM. The main problem is that somewhere between 30% and 40% percent of ambassadorial appointments are made from non-career ranks. When Johnson was President, he wanted to keep the number under 40%. Even Kennedy, who was not impressed by the Foreign Service, tried to keep it under 40%. These non-career appointees don't want Central American posts or African posts; there are a lot of posts that they don't want. So they get European posts. That is a fact of life and the Service must accept it. Therefore, the system has to concentrate on who the DCM will be, who will be the chiefs of the Political Section, Economic or Administrative Sections. That is what the system must concentrate on. If the President wants to fill certain jobs with non-career people, that is his prerogative and he will do it. The Department keeps fighting about the Ambassadorial job; it should think more about the number two jobs and the Section chiefs.

Q: When you were Deputy Under Secretary, were these the kinds of issues that came to you that kept your "plate full"?. Were most of the issues you worried about in the personnel field?

RIMESTAD: Yes. Mostly about individuals. In the final analysis, people would talk theory and then get down to one or two actual cases. By the time the lunch was over, you got to the bottom line: the assignment of one or two officers.

Q: In your experience, are individual assignments as important in other institutions? Or would the discussions with some one at your comparable level have been more system-oriented or philosophical?

RIMESTAD: I can tell you that in the ACDA, during the brief time I was there, it was no different. There are many top-level people, like McCloy, who believed that any system would work if it had good people. I believe that as well. That of course can be carried too far. There may some systems that are so lousy that no one can make it work, but give me any reasonable system and with good people they will make it work.

Q: What were your views of your own staff when you were Deputy Under Secretary?

RIMESTAD: It was a mixed bag. Roberts in budget was good; he was not the fellow that I would have picked, but did an acceptable job. He did not fare too well with Congressional staffs; he had a tendency to talk down to them which they didn't appreciate. The Chief of Personnel changed so often while I was there that I don't have a clear answer to your question. The Director General—John Steeves—was not very useful. On my first day on the job, he came to see me to tell me that he should have had my job. Other than Steeves, it was a competent staff. I did have a change in the Administrator of Consular Affairs when Barbara Watson was appointed. She was a great person. Just great! Absolutely tops. She had a legal background and was just the right appointment for that job. You never had to worry about her. Never. She had good judgement. She was highly respected by her staff.

Q: In retrospect, would you have done things differently as Deputy Under Secretary than you actually did?

RIMESTAD: Yes, if I could do it over again. For example, I would put a much, much greater emphasis on restructuring of our overseas representation. I would have tried to cut down overseas staffing, particularly from other government agencies, who, as I said earlier, could have performed as effectively if not more so by sending their people from Washington for specific and short-term assignments. That would have greatly reduced our large housekeeping functions overseas, maintaining housing and schools and all that goes with overseas staffing.

Q: Along the same lines, what were your views of Consulates General and Consulates? Did we need all of them?

RIMESTAD: They are there primarily to “show the flag”. Many were not needed then and are certainly not needed today. But I would have liked to give to Nice or Marseille or Bordeaux, for example, as long as they were open, more consular functions and kept them out of the Paris Embassy. Such a decentralization might have justified keeping those posts open. If such decentralization were not acceptable, I would have preferred to have Honorary Consul Generals in most of the large cities in Europe. I would have given them enough money to have an office, but I would not have paid them. That is very much what the Europeans do in the United States. They have Honorary Consul Generals. Such a system would have been a big help; it would have been good public relations and would have met our needs adequately. You might have had to have an American in some of the places to take care of the consular responsibilities. We made a mistake when we just completely closed these posts. We didn't save that much money; we should have kept a presence. We could have done that by providing just enough money for an office and a secretary—$ 25,000 would have done that in most of these cities.

Q: You implied in one of your previous comments that the size of the Department's administrative workload was just too large. It had to support too many Americans overseas. Is that correct?

RIMESTAD: Yes. We should have achieved that cutback by bringing back some of the people stationed overseas. When I left Paris, there were about 750 Americans in the Embassy. Two-thirds were not State Department. It was true that CIA was a large presence at that time, but all had to be provided office space and housing. I always wondered what all these people were doing. Why couldn't they be stationed in Washington and fly to Paris when needed.

Q: What were your relationships with other agencies when you were Deputy Under Secretary?

RIMESTAD: I saw so little of them. Commerce knew that I didn't want the commercial service to transfer from State to Commerce. But that was the only agency with whom relationships were tense. I didn't see much of USIA or AID; we had good working relationships. I had very good working relationships with CIA, AEC. I supported the general concept of joint administrative services at overseas posts, but since it varied so much from post to post, it could not be discussed in the abstract. I supported joint services in the larger posts, as long as State maintained the leadership role. In smaller posts, particularly those where other agencies overwhelmed State, the top job probably had to be filled by a State officer because the orders would come from the Ambassador and it would have been difficult had it been a representative of another agency. It might have worked if an Ambassador would have been willing to have the administrative support provided by AID or any other agency. I think that case would have been very rare. One problem was that other agency representation varied so much from time to time. One year it would be large; a few years later it might be non-existent. That would have made support by that agency very difficult.

Q: While you were Deputy Under Secretary, there was a change in administrations. What do you recall from that transition?

RIMESTAD: Except for myself, every senior officer in the Department left when the new administration came into power. One of the great mysteries has always been why I was kept on because I had no contacts with the Nixon people. Kissinger spent a lot of time in State; Rogers was there often. Rogers brought in his own team, more or less. That transition was not difficult because it was obvious right from the beginning that Nixon would be his own Secretary of State. It was clear that nothing would happen in the Department without Nixon's blessing.

Q: Did you have any particular responsibility for preparing briefing papers for the new team?

RIMESTAD: They didn't ask for any. They didn't have a transition team in administration. And I don't think that they had one on the substantive side either. It was obvious that foreign policy would be decided in the White House, not in State. There was no transition team, as had been set up in the past. The new team had a nice office on the first floor and had four or five people there, but it was not a transition team in the usual sense of the word. The new team showed no interest in the organization or management of the Department. The emphasis was 100% on substantive issues.

Q: When Rogers took over as Secretary of State, he left you entirely alone?

RIMESTAD: Absolutely. Only Richardson, as I mentioned earlier, showed any interest in management. That was true also for personnel appointments. If the Secretary had any wishes, they would be transmitted to me through Richardson.

Q: Did the new appointees make any demands on you?

RIMESTAD: Nothing unusual. Some of them wanted to bring their own secretaries and we agreed to that. Some of the new appointees were easy to get along; some were more difficult. There was a guy by the name of Pederson, who was appointed as Counselor, who for a time, I think, thought he was the Secretary of State. That was the exception. There were a lot of ambassadorial appointments that became problems, but not on my side of the house. There were mostly problems resulting from the lack of White House checking with Congress on whether the nominations would be approved. But I had no problems with the new team on ambassadorial appointments. We followed established practice of using a small committee of senior officials to make up the list of candidates. That list went from Rogers to the White House and any problems were discussed between Rogers and the White House. It was quite different from the practices during the Johnson

Administration. This change was primarily due to the fact that Nixon wouldn't talk to anybody but his very senior officials. Johnson and Kennedy would go directly to the officer who would have the most knowledge on a subject; Nixon would not. Kissinger also never called me. Once in great while, Eagleburger would call, but that was it.

But as I said, after three months, I knew that I wasn't welcomed. I would put a problem forward and either not get an answer or some staffer would call me. I took that as an indication that my time was up. That was not the normal operating procedure on the Seventh floor. Rogers dealt directly with other Deputy Under Secretaries. I went to one lunch given by the Secretary; he used to have such affairs about three times per week for his top staff. I was invited to only one. That really told me that my days were numbered. That made me wonder even more on why I had not been replaced. I still don't know what transpired. I assume that someone talked to Nixon because the President had to approve the re-appointment, but I don't know who it was or why it was done. But by the end of the third month, I told my wife that we would be moving; I had been around the Department long enough to know when things were going well and when they weren't. And they weren't. In the Nixon Administration, all you had to say that this was the way it was done in the Johnson Administration and that would be sufficient cause to change it. Rogers was nice to me; Richardson was nice to me. But obviously I was not their choice. I know that Richardson wanted Macomber; he made no bones about it. I don't think that Macomber had any closer relationship to the Secretary than I did; he probably didn't care one way or another.

Q: Lets' move on to your Geneva assignment. You arrived in Geneva in December, 1969. What were the main responsibilities of the U.S. Representative (Ambassador) to International Organization?

RIMESTAD: Management. The title had little meaning. You got the benefit of going to all the National Day observances of each country represented in the UN bodies. We had a small political and a small economic staff. The job was basically to manage the logistics for

all the conferences convened by the UN specialized agencies headquartered in Geneva. I had very little to do with that; I had a good staff that handled these matters. Some of the UN agencies, like WHO (World Health Organization) did their own logistic work. All we needed to do was to tell them the size of our delegation, they would take it from there. I never gave a speech that I had written; all my speeches were written in Washington and one better not have changed a word. I gave these speeches once in a while to one or another of the UN specialized agencies when the Washington agency didn't send a high level representative to Geneva. There is a lot of political mileage to be obtained by taking an expert from Chicago and sending him to Geneva to give a speech. He was very honored. Maybe that speech should have been delivered by the US Ambassador, but no domestic political credit would have accrued. The US Representative was an Ambassador in title only. You are useful in helping Congressmen or other high-ranking officials. We had a very heavy visitors workload. We did everything possible to make these VIPs comfortable during their visits to Geneva. We would have dinner party for them. We had good relationships with the other European representatives who had the same problems. I would probably give a dozen large dinner parties every year.

As with other US overseas representation, if we were still in the sailing ship era, permanent personnel stationed in Geneva would have been useful. But today, with modern transportation, it is much more effective to send people from Washington to give the speeches and attend the conferences. Only rarely—if someone would get sick for example—would the US representative have to stand in.

Q: What did your political and economic staffs do?

RIMESTAD: The economic officers would work primarily on GATT (The General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs organization) which is headquartered in Geneva. I would not have anything to do with GATT—I wouldn't touch that thing. That had many people already involved. Washington watched those deliberations very carefully. The economic officers worked for me, but it was understood that the prudent approach was to leave them

alone. I did a lot of work on the immigration and disaster relief programs that Sadruddin Aga Khan ran for a long time. I gave them a lot of checks and gave a lot of impromptu speeches.

But the Ambassadorial job in Geneva was essentially a managerial one. You also had to have a sense of when to step in and when to step out. You were dealing with a lot of egos. At one time, there was a fellow by the name of Walsh who was working with WHO. He was a friend of President Nixon; he ran Project “HOPE”. When I met him, I told him that if he ever ran into a political problem that might become testy, to let me know and I would see what I could do. In reply he said: “What do I need some pipsqueak from State Department to tell me how to do my job” and he walked out.

Despite this episode and my other comments, I do believe that some resident US representation in Geneva is required because there are a lot of formal government notes to be delivered to the various international organizations and that needs to be done by a senior official. I had to go to the ILO (International Labor Organization) on many occasions; we had trouble with them. I would carry the formal note over and explain it. That's when I became familiar with that famous State Department record called the “Memorandum of Conversation”. You would write it up before the meeting and then hand it to the person with whom you would have the meeting. They appreciated it; everybody appreciated that the staff work had been done ahead of time. This would preclude any surprises. Sometime the other person would have done the same thing; we would then sit down and make what modifications were necessary and come up with an agreed document.

It is important that we have some senior representation in Geneva. It is an all-year job with little time for vacation because one or another of the international organizations would be involved in a conference or some activity that needed monitoring. December and January were the slow months; otherwise there was always something going on.

Q: Were you satisfied with the role that the U.S. played in these international organizations while you were in Geneva?

RIMESTAD: We had the big fight with the ILO, which they brought on themselves. I knew the chairman—he was a Britisher. He had to make a choice of whether he would offend us or the Soviets. He appointed a Russian to be his deputy. I told him that we could never accept that. He said that he had to make a choice between two unpalatable options. Finally Rooney, at George Meany's request, cut off US financial support to ILO. And we pulled out.

We were sufficiently involved in WHO; we were very forthcoming with WHO in terms of financial support which is what they needed. We were very active in trying to eradicate small pox, yellow fever, malaria and other major diseases. So I was satisfied with US involvement with the international organizations headquartered in Geneva.

Q: You left Geneva in May or June of 1973 after almost four years. Did you enjoy the assignment?

RIMESTAD: It was very pleasant, but at times not challenging.

Q: Then you decided to retire?

RIMESTAD: Yes. I talked to Macomber about future assignments and he told me that there was nothing at the moment. He said that there would be an opening in Honduras and some other post, but that I would have to return to Washington and wait for an opening. Macomber was telling me what I had told many Ambassadors while I was Deputy Under Secretary of State. “We will bring you back and we will see what we can do”. I could not nor would I walk the hallways. I asked him to arrange for my retirement.

Within the Senior Service, many officers had to be brought back without an onward assignment. Some were very good officers; some had very little possibility for an onward

assignment. The one thing we did frequently when I was Deputy Under Secretary was to use that section of the Foreign Service Act which permits the Secretary to retire any returning Ambassador who did not receive another assignment within three months. We did that frequently. An Ambassador would return from an overseas tour and if no other assignment had been found within the three months period, he would get a termination notice.

Q: Thank you very much, Idar. That was a very useful contribution to the Oral History of the Foreign Service collection.

End of interview